

**SUMMARY OF THE  
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING  
MAY 22, 2001**

The Accrediting Authority Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Tuesday, May 22, 2001, at 1:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time (MDT) as part of the Seventh NELAC Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, UT. The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Louis Johnson of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss currently proposed changes to Chapter 6, and to discuss other items on the committee's agenda.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Johnson introduced himself, and the committee members introduced themselves to the audience. Mr. Johnson provided an overview of the committee's agenda for the meeting and a review of the NELAC ground rules for the meeting.

**PROPOSED CHANGES TO CHAPTER 6/CHANGES TO NELAC STANDARD FROM THE FLOOR**

Mr. Johnson reviewed the committee's primary intent with the current standard changes, namely the issues of (1) uniformity of audits and (2) differences in standard interpretation by laboratories and other parties. He then proceeded to review the committee's changes to Chapter 6 on a line-by-line basis and to request input from the audience regarding those changes.

6.2.3(a)(1)(D) changed to: a list of names of the qualified assessors and a list of technical support personnel (as defined in 3.4.1.2) with areas of responsibility, education and experience for each name listed.

6.3.1(b)(8): Add "areas of responsibility" following "the names."

6.3.1(b)(10): Revert to the prior version (June 2000) before the proposed changes were made.

6.4.2(b)(7): Changes may be made to this section as part of the committee intent to re-evaluate the use of the term "assess" when applied to accrediting authorities. The committee is recommending a global standard change to the term "evaluate" in place of "assess" when referring to the evaluation/assessment of accrediting authorities. The committee also discussed the logistics of this requirement and the difficulties it may present to the accrediting authorities and to the laboratories. The committee decided to revise this section, and to relocate it to a new section at 6.4(d). The new section 6.4(d) will read as follows: "As part of the 2-year AA renewal process, the NELAP evaluator(s) shall observe an accrediting authority's laboratory assessor(s) conducting an on-site assessment of a laboratory seeking initial or renewal NELAP accreditation. The NELAP evaluator(s) shall not participate in the laboratory's assessment."

6.4.2(e)(1): The phrase “assessment staff” was changed to “assessors.”

6.10: In subsection (a), change “NELAP assessment” to “NELAP evaluation.” In subsection (c), change “NELAP assessment” to “NELAP evaluation,” and remove “final” and remove “as the defacto standard.”

Appendix A needs to reflect the committee’s product in terms of format (the printout provided is incorrectly formatted). Mr. Johnson will ensure that the correctly formatted text is provided. Appendix section A.2.2 should read “. . . Cannot Reach an Agreement.” Section A.2.1(b) should add at the end, following “days of notification,” the phrase “of the issue.” In section A.2.2(a), move the phrase “within 7 days” to the beginning of section (a). In section A.2.2(b), change “have 30 days” to “have 45 days.”

Mr. Joe Aiello presented a review of the recommendations of the accrediting authority workgroup regarding deadlines for compliance with NELAC Standards by the accrediting authorities. The revisions they recommend for immediate adoption in the current set of revisions in section 6.5 are as follows:

Section 6.5(a)(2) and Section (a)(3): add in each section, following “when,” the phrase “as set forth in Section 6.4.3(g)(3).”

Section 6.5(b): The workgroup had substantial revisions and additions to this section, which are as follows:

- b) If the deficiencies continue to exist after two years from the date the original extension was granted, ~~the NELAP recognition granted as set forth in subsection 6.4.3(g)(3) above will not be renewed.~~ the accrediting authority shall reapply to the NELAP Director, through the NELAP assessment team, for an additional extension time. The additional extension of time will be subject to the following conditions:
1. it shall not exceed two years, unless the Accrediting Authority Review Board recommends to the NELAP Director an additional length of time, and
  2. the accrediting authority shall meet the conditions given in Section 6.5(a)(1), (2), and (3), and
  3. the accrediting authority shall provide documentation to demonstrate that it has made significant progress towards completing its regulatory or legislative process.

The committee made one revision to the workgroup’s recommendations, as follows:

Section 6.5(b)(3): Change from “correcting its application and/or assessment deficiencies” to “completing its regulatory or legislative process.”

## ACIL QUESTIONNAIRE

Mr. Art Burton provided a review of the recent 27-question questionnaire developed by the Transition Committee which was distributed by the American Council of Independent Laboratories (ACIL) to laboratories which are currently NELAP accredited. Eighty-eight responses have been received so far. The data summary has not yet been completed but will be provided to the NELAC Board of Directors and the Accrediting Authority Workgroup when it is complete. Key findings to date include that laboratories believe that NELAC has, or may have, improved data quality. ACIL is concerned about the consistency of the NELAC assessments and strongly supports the actions that the AA workgroup are about to implement. ACIL would like this survey, when complete, to provide a basis for evaluation of improvements to the program.

## CHAPTER 6 QUESTIONNAIRE

Mr. Johnson provided a review of the questionnaire developed by the Accrediting Authority Committee related to issues of uniformity, which was sent to 80 NELAC laboratories and to a number of accrediting authorities.

Eighteen responses have been received so far. There were variable responses to questions about the following:

- duration of assessments,
- number of on-site assessors,
- qualifications of assessors,
- training for assessors,
- use of checklists,
- use of other tools during assessments,
- confidence in equal treatment by the accrediting authorities,
- evaluation of AAs during an on-site assessment,
- and barriers to their state becoming an accrediting authority.

Responses from Four accrediting authorities included questions about the following:

- number of assessors,
- duration of assessment,
- number of fields of testing they were being evaluated for,
- number and type of documents from laboratories which they required prior to assessment,
- use of checklists,
- degree of assessor familiarity with the NELAC Standards,
- thoroughness of assessments,
- number of assessors in the program,
- amount of training received,
- amount of technical experience of assessors,
- assessment experience of assessors,

- occurrence of evaluation of assessors during an on-site assessment,
- degree of the evaluation rigor,
- and feedback about assessments by other accrediting authorities.

The committee will receive a copy of the full responses from the laboratories, and interested parties may also request a copy.

#### **FURTHER COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES AND CLOSING COMMENTS**

Mr. Johnson asked the committee how they would like to present the proposed changes, and they decided to separate the general committee changes from the changes by Mr. Aiello's accrediting authority workgroup.

He then asked the audience for their concerns and issues that they thought the Accrediting Authority Committee should be concentrating on. Current issues for consideration include:

- Assisting states which have NELAC accredited laboratories, but which are not accrediting authorities to deal with administrative issues.
- Consideration of making Chapter 6 more similar to the National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA) standards.
- Assisting with development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for evaluation of AAs.
- Dealing with the global change of the term "assess" to "evaluate" when referring to the evaluation of the AAs.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There were no further items raised by the audience or committee members. Mr. Johnson thanked the audience for their attendance and their participation, and adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:00 p.m.

**ACTION ITEMS  
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING  
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<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Review and compare Chapter 6 to NACLA standards	not specified
2.	Assist with development of SOP(s) for evaluation of accrediting authorities	not specified

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ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING  
MAY 22, 2001**

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